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SUBJECT: IRAQ REGIONAL STRATEGY - PRELIMINARY UNAMI
THINKING ON WAY AHEAD

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Classified By: PMIN Robert Ford for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) The UN, like us, is in the process of formulating ideas on how best to promote Iraq's regional engagement. On March 11, Ambassador Gerard Sambrana, SRSG de Mistura's Special Political Advisor (and the senior UNAMI official most directly involved in the Neighbors Process), shared with us UNAMI's current preliminary thinking on approaches they believe offer the best prospects for progress. Sambrana conveyed that UNAMI is looking for clarity on U.S. intentions and wants to ensure that our efforts are in synch. He also said UNAMI is looking at ways to improve water cooperation between Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria and to implement a joint demining program between Iraq and Iran. Sambrana noted that de Mistura plans to travel to Kuwait soon with the intention of facilitating discussions/negotiations between Iraq and Kuwait on outstanding bilateral issues. End summary.

Neighbors Process & International Compact
for Iraq: New Approaches Needed

¶2. (C) As he has made clear previously (Ref A), Sambrana said the Neighbors Process, as currently constituted, is a weak mechanism that falls short of its goals and does not effectively address substantive issues of mutual concern to Iraq and its neighbors. PM Maliki has shown little interest in it, the MFA has not developed a strategic rationale for what Iraq wants from the process, and Iraq's neighbors are divided in their priorities and interests. For the mechanism to be of value it has to change, he said.

¶3. (C) Sambrana said the UN is also reflecting on how the International Compact with Iraq (ICI) should evolve, what format it should take, and which issues would best lend themselves to regional dialogue. In that context, he argued the ICI should become "less intrusive": instead of focusing on specific projects tied to Iraq's budget, it should serve as a more general forum for discussing sectoral issues aimed at promoting regional integration. Sambrana cautioned that UNAMI believes that PM Maliki is not in favor of continuing the ICI, to which PMIN responded that Maliki's interest in it is dependent on the ICI's value in promoting investment in Iraq. In that context, PMIN pointed out that Maliki viewed the GCC 3 process, in part, as a way to encourage Gulf investment in Iraq. Throughout the discussion Sambrana made clear that the UN is looking for indications on how we intend to proceed on the regional front so as to ensure that our efforts are complementary.

Water - A Good Issue for Cooperation

14. (C) Sambrana said one particular regional issue he is encouraging SRS de Mistura to pursue is water cooperation among Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria. This initiative, he said, would be separate from the Neighbors or ICI processes and would seek to build on ongoing technical programs of the World Bank and UNDP. He noted, for example, that recent UNDP workshops in Bari, Italy and Copenhagen, Denmark, which involved technical experts from all four countries had been successful. PMIN encouraged UNAMI to engage GOI Water Resources Minister Abdel Latif Rashid in this regard and offered to facilitate a meeting between Rashid and Sambrana. (Note: An Iraqi-Turkish-Syrian joint technical committee on water issues met in Istanbul February 22-23 where the GoT Qwater issues met in Istanbul February 22-23 where the GoT asked Syria and Iraq to present concrete proposals on the use of additional water to be released by Turkey. The proposals are due next week. Additionally, the GoI will participate in World Water Forum 5 in Istanbul, March 16-22, and an Iraq-Syria-Turkey ministerial on water issues is anticipated on the margins of the Forum. End note.)

Iraq-Iran Joint Demining Project

15. (C) Sambrana said that UNAMI continues to work on an Iraq-Iran joint demining project. The Iraqi MoD, he noted, will agree only to "selective" rather than general demining for security reasons. UNAMI is moving forward under this framework. Work between the two countries will focus on demining entry points, oil fields, and areas where the border

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needs to be delimited.

Facilitating Kuwait-Iraq Negotiations

16. (C) Finally, Sambrana said that SRS de Mistura is planning to go to Kuwait "as soon as possible" with the purpose of offering to facilitate Kuwait-Iraq negotiations on outstanding bilateral issues. Sambrana was not clear on what precise role de Mistura envisioned for the UN other than helping the two countries begin reviewing the relevant UNSC resolutions and then negotiating bilaterally.

Comment

17. (C) UNAMI's interest in promoting/facilitating regional dialogue between Iraq and its neighbors -- both in a multilateral and bilateral context -- is in line with the UN's broader intentions to expand its activities in Iraq. What it seeks now is a clearer understanding of U.S. intentions in the region and how best its efforts can complement our own. It is clear that Sambrana at this point has a vision but not a blueprint for Iraq's regional engagement.
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